Dear Jim,

7/31/90

In a letter I got from Sam Silver today he conveyed your regards. That reminded me that when Joe Labovsky brought Alma and Sammy here a couple of weeks ago and I heard one of them say you'd returned to Wilmington I'd asked Alma for your address so I could write you. She didn't so I'll send this to her and ask her to address and mail it.

A couple of weeks earlier Izzy Salkind and his wife were here. First time I'd seen him since World War II. I think you knew his wife before she married the first time, as Eleanor Franklin. She married a friend of mine, Danny Driessen, a fine fellow who was killed in World War II. They both seem fine.

I'd heard that after you retired you'd returned to the Washington area but that I learned after it wasn't safe for me to drive to Washington. I haven't since 1977.

I can't begin to bring you up to date on some 50 years and I presume you've heard something about what I've been doing. I was one of the first to make use of the Freedom of Information Act and one of my earliest cases led the Congress to amend the Act to open up the FBI, CIA and similar files. That was in 1974. I filed the first case under the amended Act and in all quite a few. The Act requires that requests be made, pursued administratively, and after administrative remedies are exhausted, suit can be filed. I filed quite a few and some lasted more than 10 years! I filed more information requests than I did suits, of course, and when I didn't sue the requests were usually ignored by the FBI and CIA. However, for a while I had a decent relationship with the Department of Justice appeals officer and through him the FBI was persuaded to make some compliance with the requests I'd made for copies of all records on or about me. Every once in a while they dribble a few more pages out but they have not really complied and there isn't much I can do to compel full compliance. I also made the same request of the State Department, and it also failed to comply. But it also did let me have some of the records on me.

Because I never was a Communist and they knew it the records reflect that they never even checked their CP sources on me. They had access to the membership roles, too.

But they did try to get people to label me a Communist. Including you. And in that hysterical era, according to the report(s) I got, copies of them, rather, you were truthful and not intimidated. I do want to thank you for this.

The state of things then was that it made no difference at all. That anti-democrat Pat McCarran had attached a rider to an appropriations bill that passed in that veil era and it enabled several agencies, including State, to fire anyone at all without any reason at all and without regard to any law or any personal rights. So, they fired me under that, even though under their own investigation there was no basis at all. Without charges, without any hearing. There were 10 of us, almost all Jews. I organized our defense and we were rehired with a public apology and we all resigned. I even got gypped out of my back pay.

I look back on it without regrets because although for quite some time things were not at all easy for us ultimately I was able to do what I believe is more important than anything I'd have been able to do if I'd continued working for the government.

While the importance is widely recognized now, I think that historically this will be more true because the JFK assassination had the effect of a coup d'etat.

The last time I visited you in Wilmington, when you lived near the reservoir, you had written a book or part of a book you planned on a Reconstruction black Senator from the South. Was his name Bruce? My recollection is that I did not think the writing I then read was good. Or appropriate to the subject. I've forgotten the specific reason I did not think the writing was as good as it could be. However, it seems to me that with all the changes over the years that book could have wide acceptability now and could be quite useful if it were published. I presume not having heard about it that it wasn't published. Do you think going back to that would give you something interesting to do now? I think it would be worthwhile.

Please remember me to all those you see I knew, family and others.

Best to you all,

Harold

P.S. All my work and all I got under FOIA will be a permanent public archive at local Hood College, one of the finest small colleges in the country. To give you an idea of the extent, not counting many containers like boxes, I've about 60 file cabinets, mostly jammed. About a third of a million pages of records I got under FOIA included.